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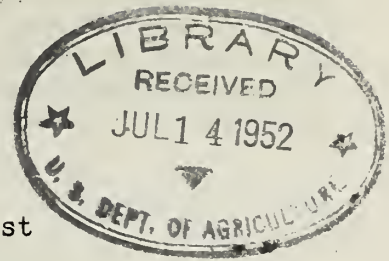
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BUYING BEDSPREADS

Bess M. Viemont
Assistant Home Economics Specialist



In buying bedspreads quality needs to be considered along with appearance and appropriateness of design and texture. Generous sizes, substantial edge finishes, well-made seams, and good fabrics should be sought even though bedspreads require only an occasional laundering and get little wear as compared to upholstery and rugs. These factors contribute to durability and add to the attractiveness of the spread. They are found in good quality merchandise but seldom in the poor grades.

The range of colors, textures, and designs is so wide that the homemaker experiences little difficulty in finding a bedspread that will fit in with other furnishings in the room. After a selection is made on the basis of suitability, look next to see that the spread is of adequate size to cover the bed and pillows and still tuck in at the foot. Sizes for a double bed vary from 80 to 90 inches in width and from 90 to 108 inches in length. The 90-inch length does not allow for covering the pillows while the 102- or 108-inch length does. It provides a generous tuck-in besides.

Examine the ends of the spread to see that they are straight and cut parallel to the crosswise yarns. A spread that is cut crooked may be finished to appear straight but with use and repeated laundering it takes on its true shape. Attempts to straighten such a spread would probably result in one too short to cover the bed and tuck in at the foot.

Often embroidered scallops finish all four edges of the spread. The stitching should be sufficiently deep and the stitches close enough together to cover the raw edges well and to prevent fraying and a shaggy, untidy appearance. If there are hems, the raw edges should be turned far enough that the stitching catches them. The stitches should be short and close to the edge. The number to the inch is an indication of quality as well as workmanship. Fourteen is considered a good average. Back-stitching at the ends of the stitching insures against raveling.

Look closely at all seams. They should be deep enough to hold and not show any indication of pulling out. Because it is difficult to mend a pulled seam, choose spreads that have the fewest joinings.

Select fabrics of good quality. Smooth, regular yarns of the same size, evenly and firmly woven, produce a cloth that wears more uniformly than lumpy, uneven yarns made into a loose, sleazy fabric. Yarns in a loosely-made cloth slip easily and soon shift out of place. Those in a firm material withstand rough handling and laundering without pulling or

slipping. Often large yarns are combined with smaller ones to give decorative effects such as stripes and checks. Breaks almost invariably occur sooner or later along these heavy yarns before the rest of the spread shows signs of wear. Long floats and yarns in openly constructed cloth catch easily and pull up into unsightly loops. These break and weaken the fabric so that a hole results.

Kinds of Bedspreads

Displays of bedspreads in the stores nowadays are so attractive and varied that they confuse many shoppers. They tempt a buyer to choose what first appeals to her without due thought as to how it will look with the curtains, rugs, and dresser scarfs already in the room. But in spite of the wide variety most of the bedspreads fall into a few general classes such as crepe, Marseilles, damask, chintz, taffeta, lace, candlewick tufted, and the Colonial coverlets.

Crepe Seersucker spreads are perhaps the best known in this group. A genuine seersucker has crepe stripes that are made by holding groups of the warp yarns taut in the loom while the yarns in between are left somewhat slack. A crepe produced in this manner is permanent. Such spreads wash easily and require no ironing, if they are shaken out and hung up straight. But if pressed the crinkled effect is not removed. In most seersucker spreads narrow stripes alternate with crinkled ones of the same width, but sometimes these narrow stripes are grouped and the group then alternated with a plain one of the same or a different width. A small design is sometimes woven in the plain stripe.

The plain and crinkled stripes are generally of different colors although occasionally they are the same. The colored ones are yarn-dyed, that is, dyed before weaving and in the better quality merchandise the colors hold up well. The plain colored spreads are usually piece-dyed, that is, dyed after weaving. The colors may be just as fast as those in the yarn-dyed spreads but they are likely not to be.

As a rule the edges of the spreads are finished with embroidered scallops but the ends of some of the cheaper ones are hemmed and the sides left with the selvages. Seersucker spreads withstand lots of hard wear and are appropriate on painted beds and with plain furniture of sturdy construction.

The plisse spread is a popular imitation of the seersucker. Instead of having the crinkled stripes woven into the fabric as the true seersucker has, the crepe is made by a printing process in which an alkali is applied to parts of the cloth. This causes the yarn to draw up wherever the solution touches and produces a surface design which tends to wash out. Stretch this crepe between the hands and watch the crinkly effect entirely disappear. This is one means of telling a plisse crepe from a genuine seersucker.

Plisse spreads are light in weight, very soft, and usually a plain color. Their snowy whiteness and delightful pastel tints make them appropriate summer spreads with mahogany furniture, but they are too delicate both in weight and color to use on oak and walnut beds of massive proportions.

The newest member of the crepe family is the "dimity-crepe." It is a crepy fabric in a plain weave with occasional heavy warp yarns that give the corded effect characteristic of dimity. These spreads probably will not wear so well as those in which the fabric is balanced, that is, with approximately the same size and number of yarns to the inch in the warp as in the filling. Breaks will undoubtedly occur along the heavy cords just as they do in other fabrics of this type.

These spreads are finished with well-made hems on all sides and the corners have durable miters. The small amount of rayon that is mixed with the cotton fibers before they are spun relieves the plainness and adds richness to the fabric. These dimity-crepes come in delightful pastels and white and make a good year-round spread on mahogany and painted furniture.

Marseilles The Marseilles spread, one of the old favorites, is much altered nowadays in appearance and in serviceability, too, no doubt. Originally it was a heavy double-faced fabric with a raised pattern. The modern ones are made from a single fabric with the design produced by an extra set of filling which alternates on the right and wrong sides. The floats or long lengths of loose filling are sometimes three-fourths of an inch long. These catch easily and pull or break in a short while, leaving a shaggy looking spread. In buying spreads of this kind beware of designs that have long floats; look for those with small designs and short floating yarns if you desire service and attractive appearance.

The set of filling that makes the design is usually dyed a medium blue, red, yellow, or a light brown. This gives the entire spread a pastel color tone although the foundation is white or cream. Occasionally the colors are reversed and the yarns in the foundation dyed while the filling used for the design is white.

The present-day Marseilles is lighter in weight than those of former years but they are heavier than the seersuckers. They are more suitable with oak and walnut furniture than with painted or mahogany pieces. As a rule, these spreads are finished on all four sides with embroidered scallops.

Damask A good quality damask similar to the covering used on high grade mattresses is very attractive and durable. It is more firmly woven than any of the crepes or the Marseilles. These spreads are reversible and are woven in a pattern which fits the top of the bed. They come in two-color combinations and are suitable with any type of furniture except the heavy, massive pieces.

There are many poor quality damasks on the market which are so loosely woven that the yarns slip easily. This type of fabric frays badly and the seams are apt to pull out. Usually the colors are harsh rather than soft, pleasing tones which harmonize well. These spreads have to be dry cleaned.

Chintz " Bedspreads and drapery ensembles are often made of chintz. If the room is large the combination is appropriate, but if the room is small so much pattern creates a feeling of crowding and unrest. These spreads nearly always have a narrow strip of material stitched to each side of a full width. The seams are on the right side and are bound with bias tape that matches one of the predominating colors in the design. A gathered ruffle or valance is sewed on with bound seams to one end and both sides and the lower edges are either hemmed or bound with the same tape. Before buying a spread of this kind examine all the seams closely to see that the stitching is deep enough to hold and that the binding is caught on both the right and wrong side.

If glazed chintz is used for these spreads, it sheds dust but it shows every wrinkle. Laundering removes the glazing and it cannot be restored satisfactorily at home. Although an unglazed chintz does not shed the dust so well, it is a better choice. It can be washed at home and will look fresher for a longer time because it does not wrinkle so badly nor so easily. Chintz spreads, either glazed or unglazed, are most suitable with painted furniture but may be used also with some of the early American styles in pine, maple, or cherry.

Taffeta Taffeta bedspreads are appropriate with formal types of mahogany furniture such as that of the late Georgian period and on some of the lighter weight walnut beds. Taffeta made from synthetic fibers has virtually replaced silk taffeta because it is less costly and often more durable. Most of the silk taffeta spreads of today are so heavily weighted that they soon split to pieces. They are not worth the prices asked for them. Either the rayon or silk taffeta may be plain or have small designs embroidered in it and occasionally the filling yarns are heavier than the warp so that the fabric has a ribbed appearance.

These spreads shed dust readily but, like chintz, they muss easily and show wrinkles badly. They should not be washed but dry cleaned. This makes the cost of upkeep greater than for the other types. Some of the lower priced spreads in this group are very lustrous and are objectionable for that reason, but in the better qualities the fibers have been partially, if not entirely, delustered. In buying rayon spreads choose those with the fewest seams, for many rayon fabrics fray badly and the seams are likely to give way. It is advisable to examine all seams closely to see that they are stitched deeply enough to hold. Don't be fooled by cording or other decorative joinings, as they sometimes merely hide narrow seams that soon pull out.

Lace The lace spread is another type appropriate only with fine furniture which has a soft, mellow finish. The daintiness of this spread calls for delicacy in line, shape, and size in the furniture and for delightful, soft pastel colors in the furnishings. Lace spreads are truly items of luxury and to look their best they must be used over a lining. This may be satin or a fine quality of sateen to match the lace or some other color in the room. Filet, point d'esprit, and bobbinet, as well as hand-knitted and crocheted bedspreads fall in this group. However, some of the handmade spreads are crocheted or knitted closely enough to be used without an under-spread.

Candlewick tufted With the popularity of early American and 18th Century furniture such as Chippendale, Adam, Hepplewhite, and Sheraton naturally the bedspreads typical of those periods occupy an important place. One of the best known is the candlewick tufted. An unbleached muslin was the foundation of most of these old candlewick spreads and with repeated washing its creamy color gradually changed to snowy white. Originally the tufts also were white and were distributed evenly over the entire spread. Only occasionally was a design worked out.

In late years colored sheeting and a 2-ply Osnaburg have replaced the unbleached muslin. Colored tufts to match or contrast with the foundation are used now more than white. They are usually arranged in a design that covers the top of the bed. A narrow machine-stitched hem finishes all four sides. In addition there is usually a row of tufts over the stitching which besides being decorative, helps to hold the hem more securely.

These spreads require no ironing. Merely shaking out and hanging them up straight to dry is sufficient. The tufts may shed some lint and in some of the cheaper grades where the foundation fabric is loosely woven a few whole tufts may pull out. But considering the first cost and the service they give, they generally prove to be a satisfactory buy. These spreads are light in weight and are suitable with any kind of furniture. They are most harmonious with four-poster beds in maple, cherry, pine or mahogany. Those made of Osnaburg are appropriate with heavy oak or walnut.

Colonial coverlets A hand-woven coverlet, when taken care of, practically never wears out. Many homes still have those that were made by a grandmother or a great grandmother and they are just as well suited to modern reproductions of Colonial beds as to the antiques for which they were first made. They are very warm and may serve as an extra cover on cold nights. The filling is usually a dark blue or red, sometimes a yellow or a brown, combined with white warp. The ends are fringed or hemmed and often the date as well as the name of the weaver appears in opposite corners. These coverlets are reversible and one side is just as attractive as the other.

Although many of the old coverlets have worn out long ago the patterns have been preserved. During the last few years much interest in hand weaving has been aroused and many handicraft guilds are now weaving new coverlets in the old patterns. A trip through the bedding department of any store reveals the popularity of the Colonial designs for there are not only modern reproductions in wool but also many in cotton and in a mixture of cotton and rayon. Some of the all-cotton ones have a fine warp and a heavy two-ply filling which is intended to resemble wool. The modern coverlets combine two or more colors which, for the most part, are lighter than those used in early days. These coverlets are much lighter in weight too and unless all-wool would add little warmth in cold weather. As a rule, they are straight on the ends and are either hemmed or finished with a fringe made by knotting the ends of the warp.

In the cotton-rayon reproductions the rayon is in the filling and makes the design. It is a pastel color combined with white warp. These spreads are light in weight, wash well, and do not muss easily. Like other coverlets woven in the Colonial patterns, there is a border, varying in width, on all four sides around an all-over center design. The rayon adds luxury to their appearance and they can be used with any type of furniture except the very heavy pieces. An all-wool or an all-cotton spread of sturdy construction would be better on them.

In addition to these principal classifications of bedspreads just discussed there is practically no limit to the variety of things that can be used as a spread. Quilts (either patched or pieced), slumber throws, Indian blankets, India prints, and even an extra sheet are but a few of the possibilities and if harmonious with the other furnishings, they serve the purpose adequately.

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